

# TENNYSON LAND

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Illustrations and notes  
relating to "Tennyson land"



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SOMERSBY.—Amongst places of special interest in the county of Lincoln, this tiny village—chiefly composed of “huts at random scattered, each a nest in bloom”—must ever stand pre-eminent. Need we say that here Alfred Tennyson, who subsequently became the illustrious Poet Laureate of his country, first opened his eyes upon that world which to him proved so full of beauty? He was born on August 5th, 1809, at the old Parsonage, Somersby (situate 7 miles north-east from Horncastle). Tennyson succeeded Wordsworth, as Poet Laureate, in November, 1850; and he passed painlessly away in the



LORD TENNYSON.

early morning of October 6th, 1892. His deathbed was bathed in the beautiful light of the full-orbed harvest moon. Retaining his faculties to the last, and crowned with years and honours, thus died Tennyson, of immortal memory ! What end more glorious could frail man desire ? His remains repose in Poets Corner, Westminster Abbey.

It was the happy lot of Alfred Tennyson to breathe free air in the days when freedom was most dear. To the seeing eye, no part of England is fuller of beauty than Lincolnshire, and to the understanding heart no people are more entertaining than those who dwell there. All along the coast the Norse traditions linger, and the Norse blood asserts itself in limb and feature. Nowhere has the energy of man fought so sturdy and successful a fight with the wastefulness of nature. The landscape in its ever-varying forms records the outcome of the struggle. Here there is utter marsh, there matchless cultivation : here the emerald meads, hard by the vast mere. In one place land has been wrested from the sea, in others the briny waters have engulfed great stretches of shore. The strife of the elements is continuous. Yet in this doubtful borderland between the flood and the field, man has not only fought but wrought, and handed down to posterity lasting memorials of his great handiwork : the graceful lantern tower of St. Botolph's Church, Boston rises, at once a beacon and a belfry, from the plain, and stands like a fairy pillar to form a pleasing part of every landscape for many miles around. Lincoln Cathedral looks down in stately beauty from its solitary height over the undulating fields on one side and swelling hills upon the other. There are tracts in England more fitted to the brush of the artist, but there is no region richer in objects calculated to develop the poetic sense. It was amidst such scenes that the late Laureate spent his early days and imbibed into his very soul that love of nature which fashioned his character and remained with him until he "put out to sea" and "Croost the Bar." He drank in facts, fancies, and inspiration from the richly-illuminated volume of nature, and he never wearied of it. Thus was he enabled to give to the world those beautiful word pictures which have made life brighter, happier, more hopeful to us by teaching us to see, and what to see, and how to see—by opening our minds to the true, our eyes to the sublime and beautiful ; by opening our ears to the music of the "babbling brook" and the ever restless sea ; by quickening our sensibility to the sweet influences of the fields. A thousand things which we should never have noticed, in which we should never have read God's autographs of beauty and blessing, Tennyson has now taught us to observe with delight and love.

There are really so many choice spots in and around Somersby that the difficulty is to make a selection. In succeeding pages a few of the most familiar scenes in "Tennyson Land" are illustrated.





The old Parsonage, Somersby. The illustrious Alfred Tennyson was born in a little bedchamber overlooking the old-fashioned garden at the rear of the house. In his "Ode to Memory," Tennyson speaks of

"The seven elms, the poplars four,  
That stand beside my father's door."

The "poplars four" no longer "stand beside the door," but the approach to the house is guarded by a row of stately elms, and the whole scene speaks of peace. One part of the house, originally used as a private chapel, is beautified with long pointed stained-glass windows. The interior of this "chapel" is further adorned by a fine old stone chimney-piece, valued at over £200; and a work of art in the shape of an exquisitely-carved door, in the same compartment, the work of Tennyson himself, bears eloquent, if silent, witness that genius in his case did not run altogether in one groove. The house is open to visitors, on payment of a small fee.



The Brook, Somersby, that tiny rivulet rendered for ever famous by Tennyson's charming poem—

I come from haunts of coot and hern,  
I make a sudden sally,  
And sparkle out among the fern,  
To bicker down a valley.

I steal by lawn and grassy plots,  
I slide by hazel covers;  
I move the sweet forget-me-nots,  
That grow for happy lovers.

I chatter, chatter, as I flow,  
To join the brimming river,  
For men may come and men may go,  
But I go on for ever.



Stockworth Mill, the scene of Tennyson's homely and touching poem, "The Miller's Daughter," which so impressed our late beloved Queen that she was constrained, in spite of some opposition, to confer the Laureateship on its author. It is a captivating spot, well calculated to vividly recall the scenes so sweetly portrayed. Standing on the old bridge, so true to nature does the poem appear, that one may well "live" over again the homely sight. Who could not amidst these surroundings conjure up the forms of the miller's pretty daughter and the young squire lover? Running one's mind over the poem, who cannot follow them in their happy after life, which passed away like one long summer's day? Towards evening a cloud appears—the sad thought that the grave may part them, calling forth the pathetic prayer that even as in life, so in death, they may be undivided:—

"Yet fill my glass: give me one kiss:  
My own sweet Alice, we must die,  
There's something in this world amiss  
Shall be undivided by and by,  
There's somewhat flows to us in life,  
But more is taken quite away,  
Pray, Alice, pray, my darling wife,  
That we may die the self-same day."

Some there are who think that the scene of "The Miller's Daughter" is not laid in Lincolnshire at all; but it is a well-known fact that Tennyson's favourite walks in the days of his youth were by the brook side, and one can well believe that the scene at Stockworth Mill, so near to his old home, where the stream is held up to turn the water wheel, would appeal to his imaginative mind, and leave an abiding impression. At any rate, the poem is decidedly applicable to this picturesque spot:—

"I loved the brimming wave that swam  
Thro' quiet meadows round the mill,  
The sleepy pool above the dam,  
The pool beneath it, never still,  
The meal sacks on the whiten'd floor,  
The dark round of the dripping wheel,  
The very air above the door  
Made misty with the floating meal."

"And oft in ramblings on the wold,  
When April nights began to blow,  
And April's crescent glimmer'd cold,  
I saw the village lights below;  
I knew your taper far away,  
And full at heart of trembling hope,  
From off the wold I came and lay  
Upon the freshly-flower'd slope."

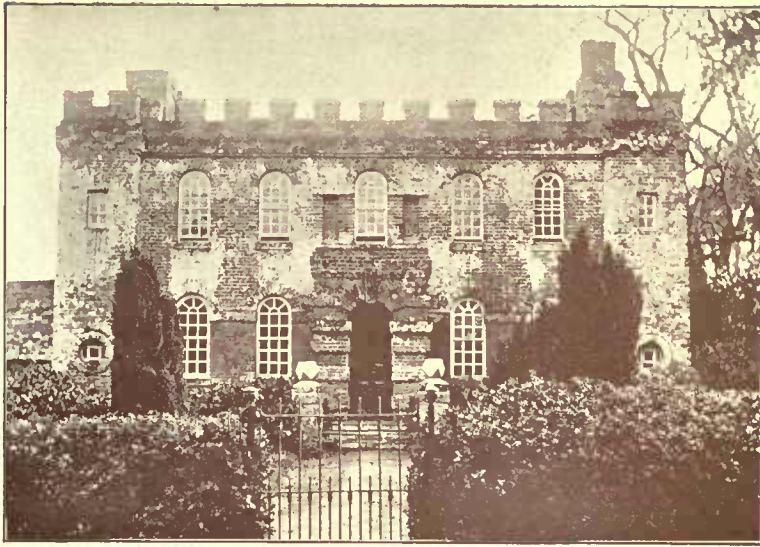
"The deep brook groan'd beneath the mill;  
And 'by that lump,' I thought, 'she sits!'  
The white chalk quarry from the hill  
Gleam'd to the flying moon by fits.  
'O that I were beside her now!  
O will she answer if I call?  
O would she give me vow for vow,  
Sweet Alice, if I told her all?'"

In visiting the scene just prior to penning these notes, the writer came across an angler who had succeeded in landing a basket of splendid trout, taken from the stream close to the old mill. Trout are fairly plentiful, but there are no grayling of which Tennyson speaks in one part of "The Brook"—

"I wind about, and in and out,  
With here a blossom sailing,  
And here and there a lusty trout,  
And here and there a grayling."

Hundreds of people visit Somersby each year, and many a handkerchief has been washed in the famous brook, and afterwards carried away, even beyond the confines of our own great Empire, as a cherished memento of a brief sojourn in "Tennyson Land."





The old "Moated Grange," Somersby, believed by many to be the home of the "Northern Farmer." It is a more romantic-looking edifice than Tennyson's house, for which strangers are apt to mistake it. In his "Mariana," Tennyson describes "the lonely moated grange," which stands close beside the house of his birth. The most trivial detail escaped not the great bard's observant eye :

With blackest moss the flower pots  
Were thickly-crusted, one and all;  
The rusted nails fell from the knots  
That held the pear to the gable wall.

About a stone-cast from the wall  
A slat with blacken'd water slept,  
And o'er it many, round and small,  
The cluster'd murrish-mosses crept.

All day within the dreary house  
The doors upon their hinges crack'd  
The blue fly sung in the pane ; the mouse  
Behind the mouldering wainscot shriek'd,  
Or from the crevice peeped about.



The Church of St. Margaret, Somersby, is an ancient edifice, consisting of chancel, nave, south porch, and western tower with four pinnacles and containing two bells. An old sun-dial still exists over the porch ; it is in a fair state of preservation, and bears the legend "Time Passeth." An old Preaching Cross in the churchyard is an object of much interest : on one side the crucifixion is portrayed, whilst on the other are figures of the Virgin Mary and Infant Saviour. Owing probably to the secluded position of the village, the cross escaped the ruthless mutilations generally bestowed upon such erections by the Puritans and other iconoclasts.



POET'S TREE, BAG ENDERBY.



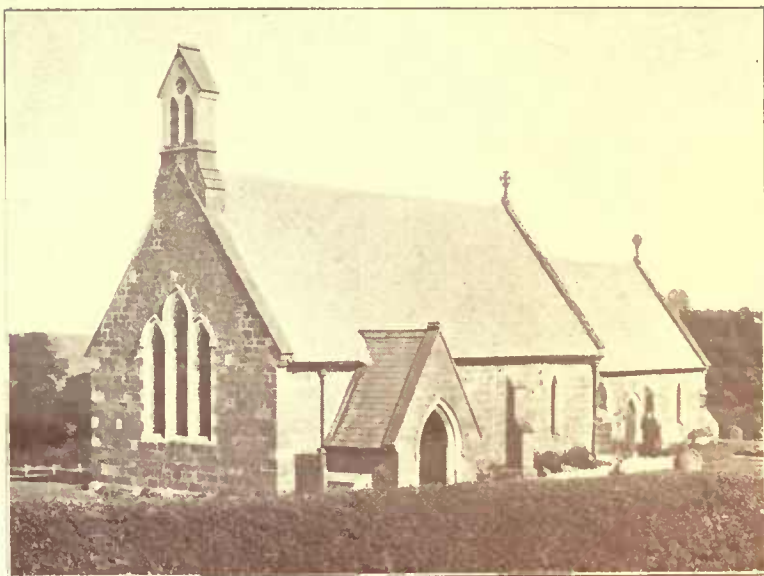
STOCKWORTH MILL, FROM AN OLD WOODCUT.







MR. H. WINN.



ST. ANDREW'S CHURCH, FULLEBY.

The quaint little village of Fulleby is situated about three miles west-north-west from Somersby. Mr. Henry Winn, whose portrait appears above, holds the unique record of having been parish clerk here for over 70 years. He has acted as renumerator for Fulleby on the last six occasions, upon which the census has been taken. Locally, Mr. Winn is familiarly known as "The Fulleby Poet"; his poetical writings, invariably of much merit and commendable sentiment, have nothing in common with the empty vapourings of the average amateur rhymester.



HAGWORTHINGHAM, IN "TENNYSON LAND."

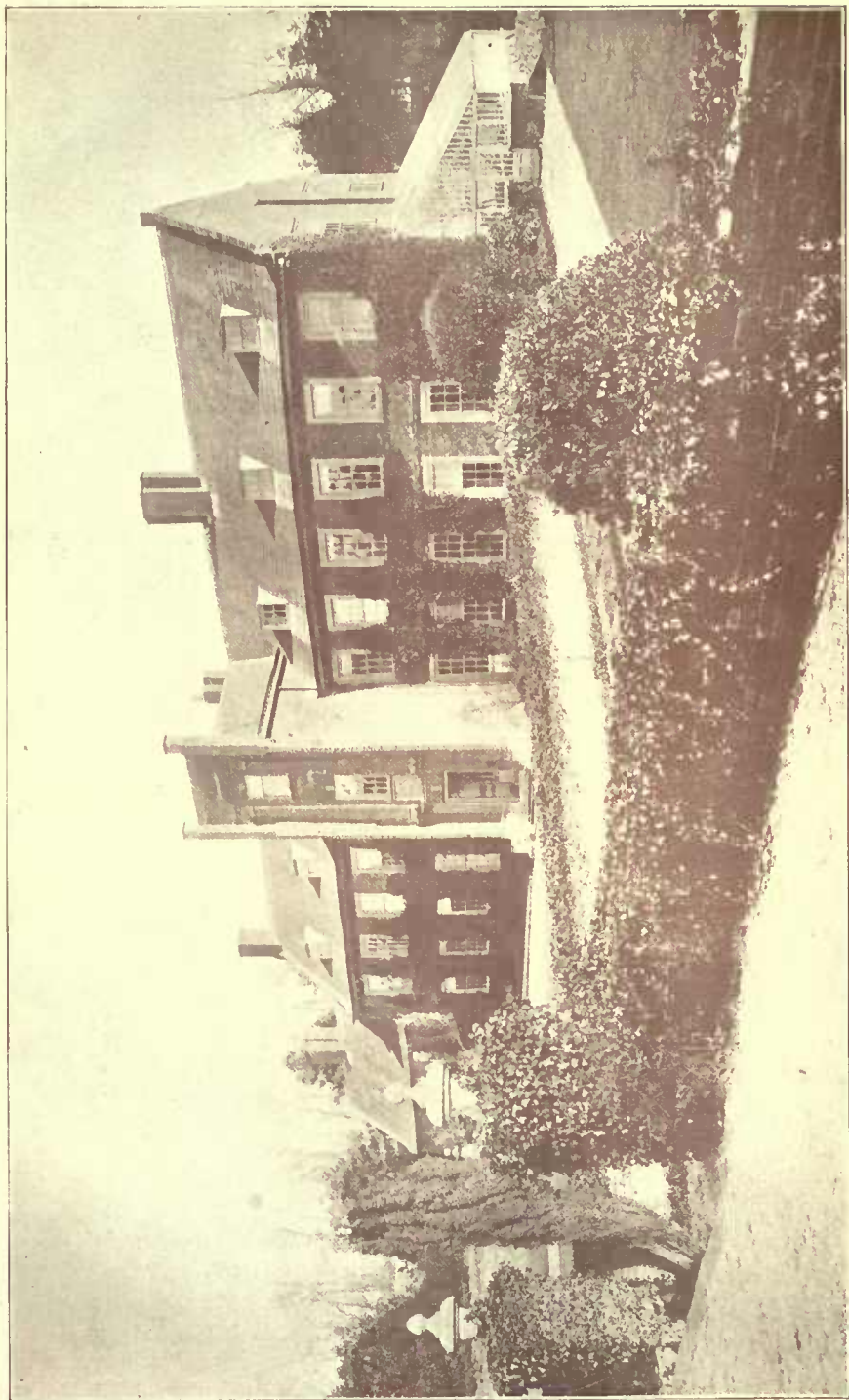


It is here worthy of record that Spilsby, which lies about 5 miles to the north-west of Somersby, has the honour of being the Birthplace of Rear-Admiral Sir John Franklin, the intrepid explorer who died in the execution of an arduous duty, undertaken on behalf of his Queen and country. He, like Alfred Tennyson, was educated at Louth Grammar School. The beautiful bronze statue to his memory, illustrated above, stands in the Market Place at Spilsby. Tennyson married a niece of Sir John Franklin.



ST. ANDREW'S CHURCH, SPILSBY.

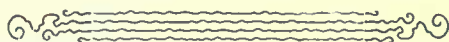




Harrington Hall, about one mile south-east from Somersby. So few large and unaltered manor houses dating from the latter days of Charles II. remain in this part of the county that no apology is needed for the inclusion of this fine old manor house amongst our illustrations of scenes in "Tennyson-Land." Anything approaching a detailed account is not possible here, but for the benefit of those interested it may be added that Harrington Hall forms the subject of a leading article in the April No. (1903) of *Lines, Notes & Queries*.

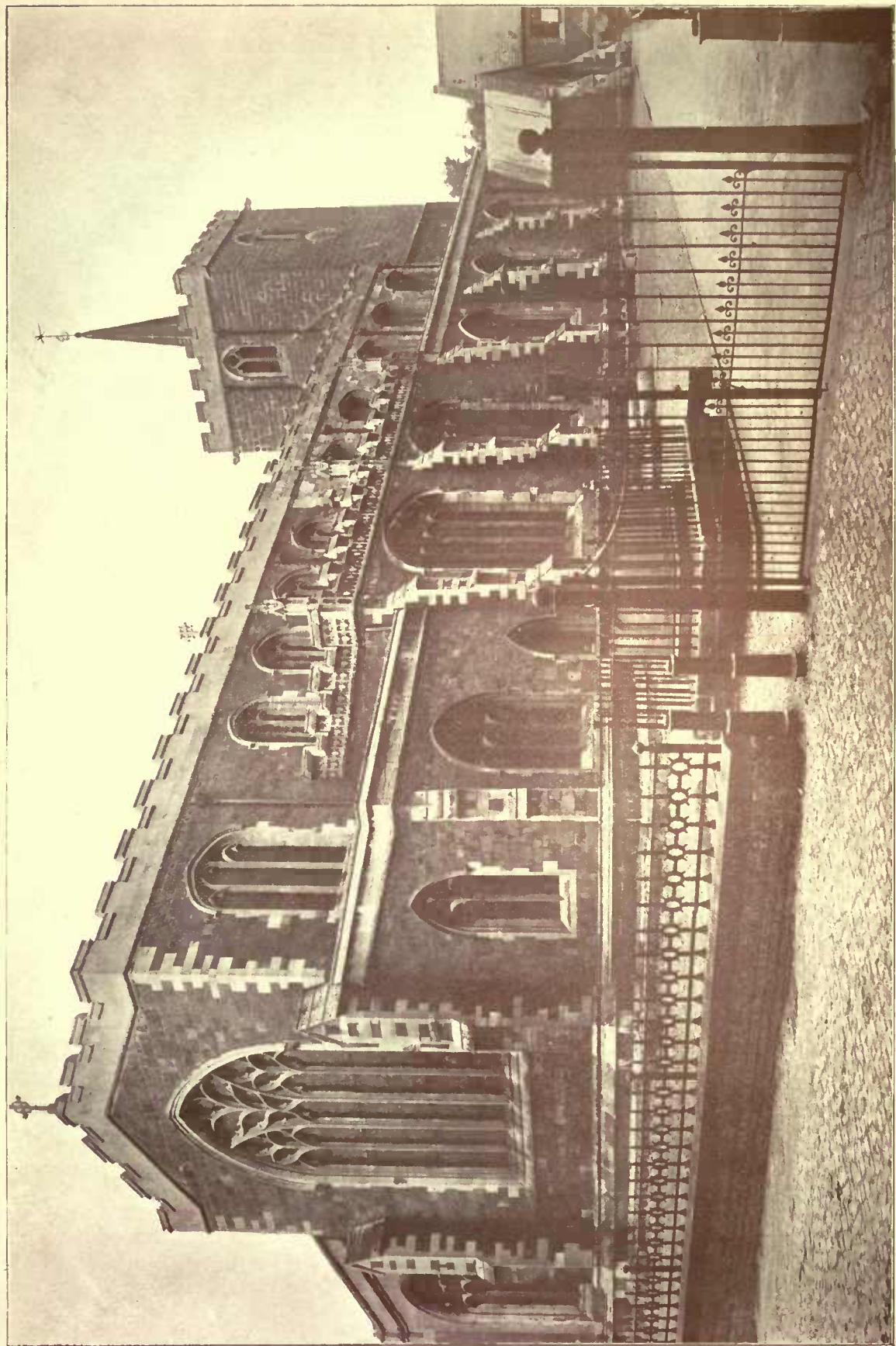


BIRD'S-EYE VIEW OF HORNCASTLE.



Western view of the Market Place, Horncastle. The square-fronted house here illustrated was, early in the last century, occupied by Mr. Henry Sellwood, a county solicitor. His wife was a sister of that heroic sailor, Sir John Franklin. She at an early age fell a prey to typhus fever, and was buried in the parish church, hard by (illustrated on next page), where a plain slab marks her tomb, with this simple inscription—"In Memory of Sarah, wife of Henry Sellwood, who departed this life on the 30th day of September, 1816, aged 28 years." There were three daughters of the marriage, of whom the eldest, Emily, became the wife of the Poet Laureate, Lord Alfred Tennyson, whilst his elder brother, Charles, married the youngest. The illustrious poet and his brother were frequent visitors here in their early days.

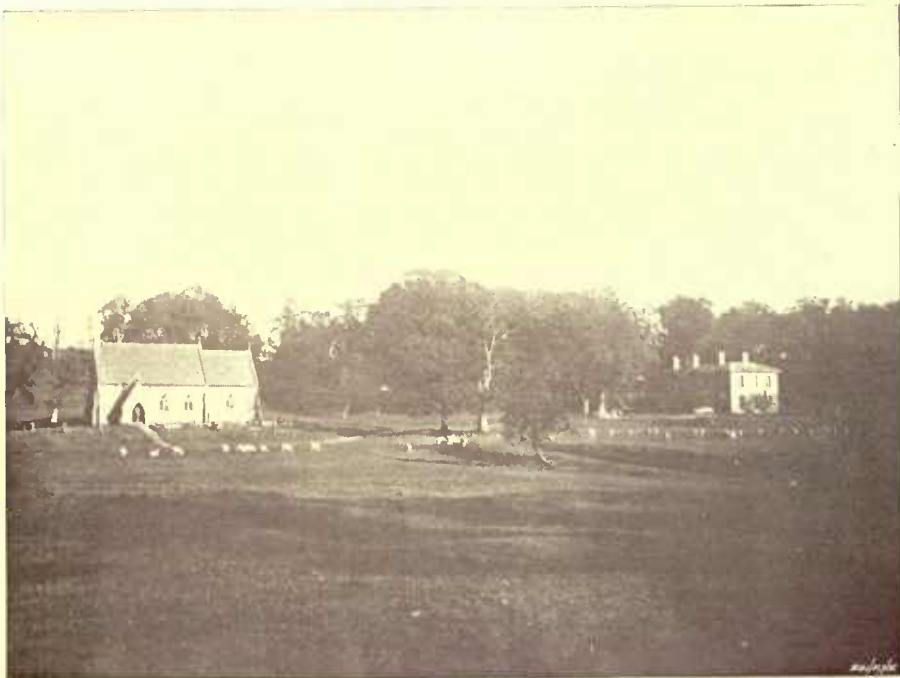




ST. MARY'S CHURCH, HORNCASTLE.



Hagworthingham Church, in "Tennyson Land," is a stone structure in the Transitional and Early English styles, consisting of chancel, nave of four bays, aisles, south porch, and western tower containing a fine peal of 8 bells. Whilst paying a visit to this church, in order to assist in ringing a short peal—or, in campanological phraseology, a "touch"—on the aforementioned bells, the writer remembers admiring several memorial windows, one of which was dedicated in 1865 to H.R.H. the late Prince Consort.



DALBY PARK, 4 miles east-south-east from Somersby.





Partney Village, about 5 miles east-south-east from Somersby.



Raithby Hall, 3 miles from Somersby, in a south-easterly direction.



As being the ancestral home of the Champions of England, the village of Scrivelsby, situate about 7 miles south-west from Somersby, can lay claim to some distinction. The Gardener's cottage, Scrivelsby, here illustrated, is prettily situated in the midst of a winding avenue on rising ground, flanked on either side with old elm trees, the intermingling top branches of which form an arch of nature's workmanship. This wayside cottage, with its creeper and ivy-clad exterior, reminds one of Tennyson's "huts at random scattered, each a nest in bloom."





THE STOCKS, SCRIVELSBY.

The ancient stocks, now green with age, are still to be seen facing the fine old lion gateway which guards the entrance to Scrivelsby court, the family mansion of the Dymokes. Although the "throwing of the gauntlet" at a coronation is now an obsolete ceremonial, the honorary title of King's champion is still permitted to the owner of the broad acres of Scrivelsby. In olden times, we have reason to believe, the champion of the day had little hesitation in applying the sobering influence of the stocks in the case of anyone who, according to his notion, exceeded the laws of sobriety and decorum.



ST. BOTOLPH'S CHURCH, BOSTON, FROM THE SOUTH-EAST.



LINCOLN CATHEDRAL.



EXCHEQUER GATE AND CATHEDRAL.

















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